The Pant Gwyn Mine disaster

The workings at Pant Gwyn and Tan y Bwlch (east of Sarn Bach), at Llanengan on the Lleyn peninsular in North Wales, were opened in the 1870s. Development was slow, but 108 workers were employed here to excavate a number of different minerals. Pant Gwyn was the main producer of copper ore in Wales, but it ended in the early 1890s. There were accidents at Pant Gwyn and the most serious was in February 1885 when three workers were drowned. There is a plaque to commemorate them on Rhianfa (SH 30862668). The owner and agent were fined £20 each. The accident was reported in contemporary newspapers.

THREE MEN DROWNED AT THE PANT GWYN MINE, ABERSOCH.
Last Tuesday evening a most serious fatal accident took place at the Pant Gwyn Lead Mine, Abersoch, the property of Mr. Gundry. There are two shafts at the mine, the old and the new. There were three men working at the bottom of the new one on Tuesday when water suddenly burst in upon them from the old shaft, and drowned the three.
By Wednesday, there were between 30 and 40 fathoms of water in the submerged shaft. As there are no engines strong enough at the mine to pump the water out, it will be necessary to connect the engines of the other mines before the shaft can be cleared, and even by this combined means it is feared that the water cannot be removed for at least five or six weeks.
The names of the unfortunate men who were drowned are John Davies, Bay View Terrace, Abersoch (a wife and five children); William Ellis, Abersoch (a wife and three children) and Owen Jones, Trwynygarreg, Llanengan (a wife and four children).
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Quite a gloom has been cast over the usually quiet village of Abersoch by this deplorable accident. Sergeant Jones, Abersoch at once sent constable Major Clayton and Superintendent Hughes who on Wednesday morning went to Abersoch to render all the assistance they possibly could. A fourth workman had a miraculous escape. Leaving his three fellow workmen at the bottom, he came up to the surface. in quest of more timber required to finish the flooring of the shaft, which flooring was then about been completed. He had no sooner reached the top when the terrible accident occurred.

Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald
21 Feb 1885

We understand that a committee has been formed in this parish, of which the rector is the chairman, Dr. Hughes, of Belle Vue. the secretary, and Mr Griffith Hughes, the treasurer, for the purpose of

collecting subscriptions for the three widows and thirteen fatherless children of the three miners who were drowned in Pantgwyn mines. on the 17th ult., in this parish

The North Wales Chronicle, March 14th 1885

On Wednesday, the 29th of last month, the body of Owen Jones was found, who lost his life with two others on the 17th of last February at the Pantgwyn workings. The discovery has thrown more of darkness on the accident than there was before but the learning where, before very long yet, have her husband back to clear, and then we trust that we can give a full explanation on all the trouble.

Y GENEDL GYMRAEG, Wednesday May 6th, 1885

Wednesday 29th of last month, the body Owen Jones, one of the men killed in work mwn Pantgwyn, on 17 February last, was discovered. The common opinion held since the tragedy happened until discovery body Owen Jones, was, that just below half way down the shaft, water broke in from the old shaft, and filled the shaft to the bottom. And it was assumed that the three men had also been buried at the bottom. The reason for this assumption is that the men who work in the place, though all attempts have failed and have nothing to go below the depth mentioned. For the last few weeks now two engines have worked hard to raise the water, and while there were still many feet between the water and the surface of debris thought to be filling the shaft, the body of the man came into sight. And had it not been that his foot stuck between the trees, no doubt it would have been on the surface of the water. The discovery of the body of man has put the unfortunate accident into greater darkness ever. We believe that there will be full light on the whole of the place when it is dry, and the litter has been cleared away.

Y Goleuad, 16 May 1885